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AUTHOR Lockledge, Ann
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ABSTRACT

It is possible to empower learners by encouraging them to make judgments and decisions about the world and then providing them with feedback on resultant conceptualizations. Teachers can help build a basis for thinking about an interdependent world by highlighting the international dimensions of topics typically studied. When students use critical thinking regarding these topics, they are prepared with the skills that will permit them to function in a pluralistic, increasingly interdependent, global society. Motivating students to think and work on their own means allowing them to express their own feelings, have a part in the decision making process, and eventually share their products with other people. Thoughtful teachers plan to reach their goals through the careful selection of strategies and materials that will first explore concepts leading to generalizations about global interrelationships. Several models are included to help explain the strategy selection that promote the thinking skills needed to arrive at a reasoned understanding of worldwide interdependence. (JB)

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Thinking Skills for an Interdependent World

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Ann Lockledge
Department of Curricular Studies
University of North Carolina at Wilmington
Wilmington, NC 28403
919-395-3360

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Thinking Skills for an Interdependent World

It is possible to empower learners by encouraging them to make judgements and decisions about this world of ours and then providing them with feedback on resultant copnceptualizations. These learners will then be motivated toward goals that allow them to construct their own meaning and enable them to feel successful when sharing the results of learning experiences with classmates.

Teachers can help build a basis for thinking about our interdependent world by highlighting the international dimensions of topics typically studied. As students come to appreciate concerns about pollution, overpopulation, discimination, and the denial of human rights that are shared by people all over the world, they must also be provided with some tools to analyze and evaluate effectively. When students are led to use critical thinking regarding such overarching problems, they are being prepared with the skills that will permit them to function in a plualistic, increasingly dependent, global society.

For the primary teacher, the basic element of global education will likely be the study of diverse human values with emphasis on the commonalities such as food, housing, dress and tools that transcend the diversity. Global education in the upper grades can then involve the study of economic, political, ecological and technological systems that transcend national boundaries as well as consideration of global issues like peace, poverty, and human rights.

Imaginative teaching for genuine engagement requires attention to both what needs to be learned and what motivates the learner -- it implies a

content in which students have some personal stake. Teachers that are facilitators, who help youngsters to implement their own learning goals, touch that inward disposition to enjoy the task at hand by providing materials that stretch the imagination and offer problem solving challenges.

Motivating students to think and work on their own means allowing them to express their own feelings, have a part in a decision making process, and eventually share their product with other people. Useful instructional materials will institute the desired behavior by providing the challenge and energy that gets students off to a good start. Materials that challenge students to think about an interdependent world will:

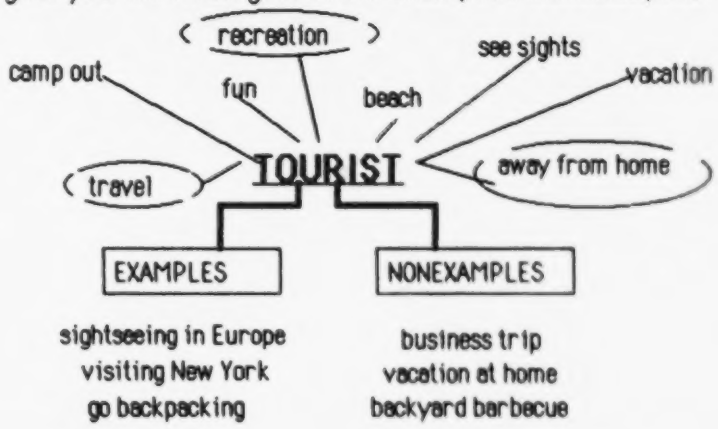
- ☐ stimulate students to finish meaningful assignments
- ☐ give clear sequential directions
- ☐ engage the affect
- ☐ deal with content worth learning
- ☐ use stimuli that varies from the main mode of presentation
- ☐ help students relate content to their own learning goals.

Thoughtful teachers plan to reach their goals through the careful selection of strategies and materials that will first explore concepts leading to generalizations about global interrelationships. Several models are included in this paper to help explain the strategy selection that will promote the thinking skills needed to arrive at a reasoned understanding of worldwide interdependence. Two of several ways to develop conceptual understanding with students are outlined in Figure One. In Figure Two the relationships between these concepts are expressed as generalizations dealing with Global Education and extended into appropriate kinds of strategies. The organizational pattern presented in Figure Three shows which types of learning are promoted by a few specific strategies. The remainder of the paper then explores in detail other stategies to extend critical thinking skills.

THINKING ABOUT CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

From an Information Processing Model

1. Tell objective, write label, repeat orally
2. Ask for attributes, write on board, circle the critical attributes
3. Provide examples and contrast with nonexamples
   (Use: Pictures, scenarios, slides, sketches, models)
4. Ask for operational definition
5. Students give their own examples
6. Students signal yes-no when given new examples/nonexamples



From the Hilda Taba Model

1. **Opening Question**
   What comes to mind when you hear the phrase interdependent world?
2. **Grouping the responses**
   Let's look at our list. Are there items we could group together?
3. **Labeling:** *What name could we give to the first group? Second?*
4. **Extension:** *Can you identify the critical attributes; give a working definition; think of examples; apply data; predict consequences ?*

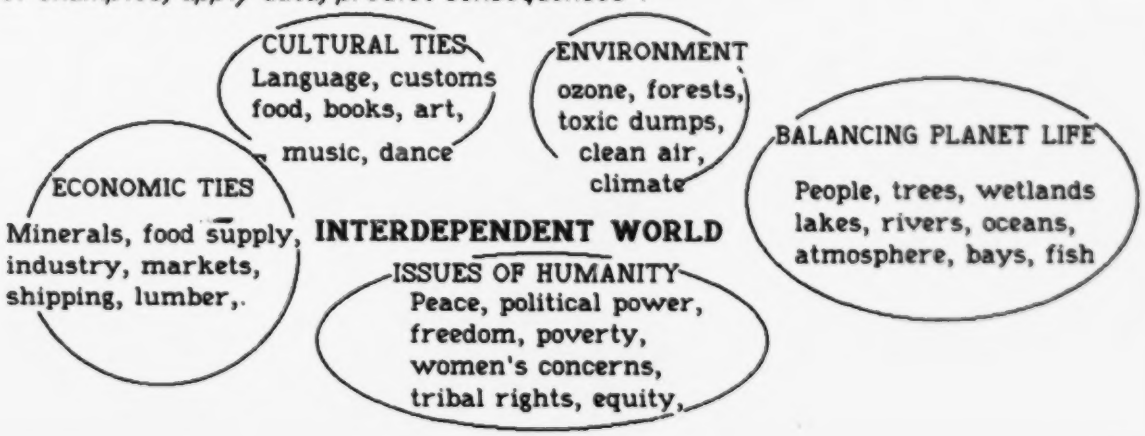


Figure One

Generalizations show the relationship between two or more concepts and are particularly useful for considering the strategies needed to develop reasoned consideration of any topic. The generalization can then be used again as the time comes to delve into yet another topic. The content implied in global issues is exceptionally adaptable to this type of planning

PLANNING FROM CONCEPT TO STRATEGY

Concepts:	**Sample Generalization:**	**Possible Strategies:**
country multiethnic traditions	Many of the traditions of a country are a result of its multiethnic background.	inquiry lesson; coat of arms picture analysis; concept map data retrieval charts; mapping
holiday tradition peoples	Holidays are important traditions for any peoples of any land.	comic strips; biopoems research teams; inquiry stations or centers; brainstorm
climate export agriculture	Climate is a factor in agricultural exports.	graphs; picture analysis specialized maps; data charts interpretive reading; listing
violence government corruption	Violence and corruption have a major impact on a country's government.	values analysis; role play team learning; political cartoon timelines; compare/contrast

Figure Two

Since teachers are the initial decision makers for the children they teach, planning in social studies often begins with the textbook as the teacher decides on what material to use and what to omit. This text cannot be followed as a complete guide however, because it was not written to meet specific curriculum goals. Furthermore the textual material must be supplemented with other instructional strategies if the teacher wishes to insure that students in fact use critical thinking.

Sometimes it is necessary to put aside the textbook and look for other material to help students reach a reasonable degree of competency in making decisions. One example is climate vs weather. While the climate of an area is determined by its latitude, altitude, landforms, and proximity to water, weather changes from day to day in sometimes predictable and sometimes seemingly capricious ways. Weather maps in the daily newspaper contain a constantly upgraded, graphic, source of data to predict the effect of weather and climate on the way people live their daily lives. Creating lessons for students using the information and charts contained in the weather forecast section of the newspaper as well as the information in an atlas or almanac makes for an interesting and valid use of the skills of observation, communication, measurement, classifiction, predictions and inference.

Works of fiction and biography are populated by such an wonderful assortment of people in such an infinite variety of circumstances that they can be used to bring social studies to life. And these works of fiction allow students to wander the world at their leisure. Learning theorists have helped us understand how learners construct their own knowledge through interactions with their environment. By allowing students to interact vicariouly with a great many environments, literature imparts a vivid sense of the myriad possibilities of the human condition. Students can find these thought provoking aspect of the characterizations in books to be shapers of global understanding.

Interdependence can also be approached with survival problem-solving situations such as "Lost on the Moon" or "What to take on the Mayflower." Students or teachers can design such an activity by filling in the situation paragraph giving consideration to what will be on the inventory and what directions to give those making the decisions.

You are a _____. On _____ you and _____ begin a trip _____ Disaster strikes when _____ and _____. There is nothing for to do but _____ even though it will take _____. You take a quick inventory and find that the following items are left. Based on _____ priorizize the usefulness of the items.

Social Studies as commonly taught in this country involves a great deal of textual reading, a fair dose of doing, and a lot of interaction with maps and other graphic representation. It is not always seen as the content vehicle to give a reason for learning to read and think and talk. Yet adult's verbal communication, outside the workplace, seems to center around topics we would label social studies. They listen to the evening news, awfulize over the latest political scandal, and then write letters to the editor about situations within the community or around the world that various elected or appointed officials should be able to rectify. When they go on trips they puzzle over road maps and discuss the relative merits of one place over the other as a possible sight. Museums or historical battlefields all have a crunch of visitors who want to hear about all of the whatever is to be seen. In other words the act of communicating becomes all important because of the content to be conveyed. This carryover into the adult world is the ultimate goal of teaching students to be thoughtful, responsible global citizens.

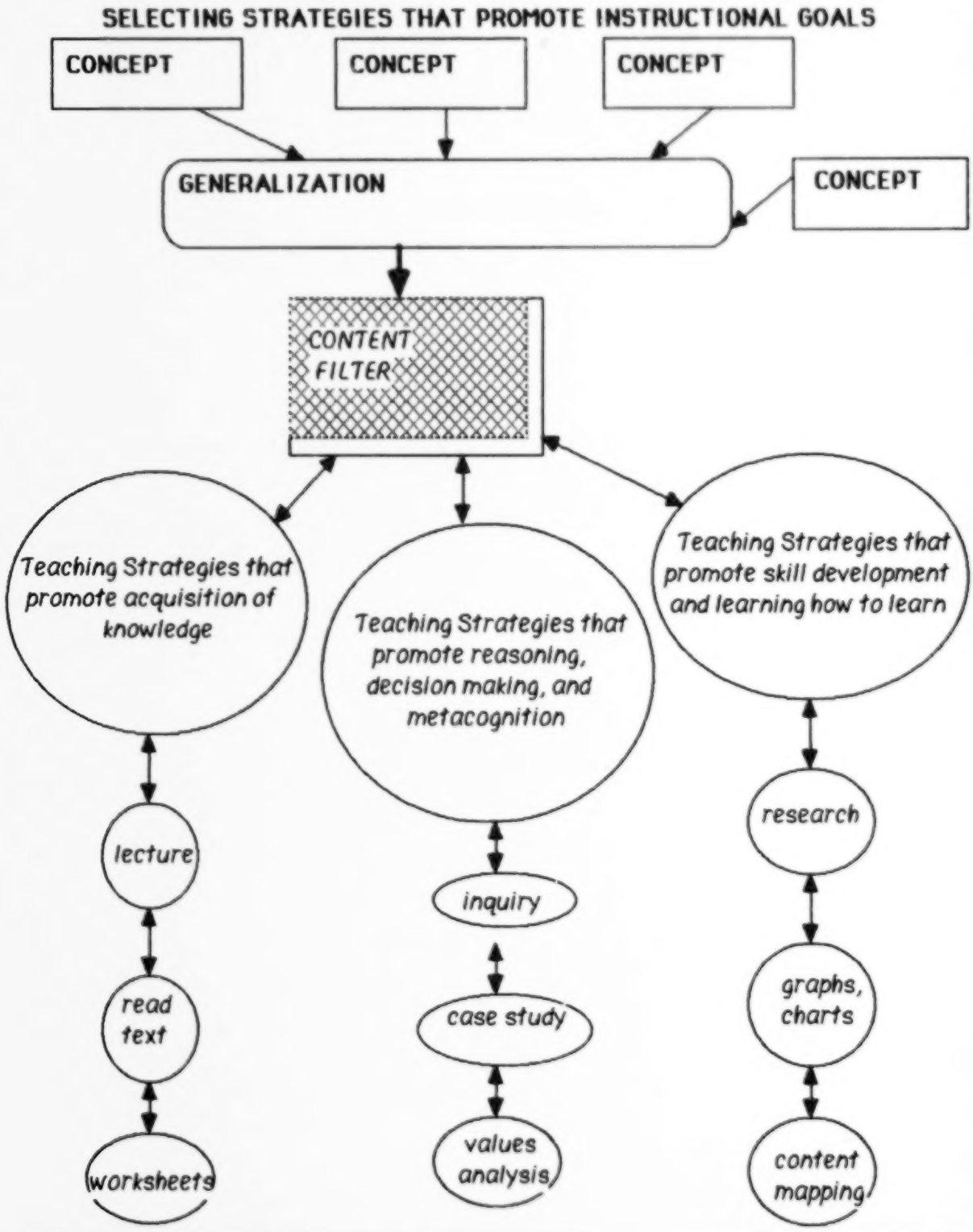


Figure Three